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Blackmailing the CIA

The CIA feels it is unduly harassed now; but in fact it is extraordinarily blessed in its enemies. Unfortunately, the very clandestine mystique which has brought it some of its better agents has also brought all the conspiracy-minded kooks swarming out of the woodwork.

Much of the irresponsible criticism of the CIA comes from the same people who have been busily looking for some secret organization, any organization, to blame for the murders of President Kennedy and others. Nothing could help the CIA better than to have its critics all look as wild in their charges as Mark Lane.

The thing has a zany kind of poetic justice. Conspiratorialists reason from a set of assumptions like these: 1) nothing happens by accident, so 2) things that favor the conspiracy were planned by the conspiracy.

Apply those norms to the conspiratorialists' own scatter-gun attack on the CIA. These attacks are helping the CIA, therefore they were planned by the CIA, therefore the conspiratorialists are themselves part of the conspiracy! To accuse them by their

own crazy logic would be a fitting return for all the innocent people they have been accusing through the years.

It is important to disentangle the real criticism of the CIA from loony talk about its responsibility for killing Jack Kennedy and other Americans. That will be all the harder because of Norman Mailer's "Fifth Estate," the drunken project for seeking out conspiracy in all its guises.

Counter-Spy, journal of the "Fifth Estate," is printing names of CIA officers around the world. It printed that Richard Welch, the slain CIA station chief in Greece, was in fact a station chief — in Lima, Peru. It hardly "reveals" any facts about Welch. His CIA post was common knowledge in Athens. Besides, *Counter-Spy* itself got the name by doing some basic homework in the State Department's Biographic Register — a game played by all kinds of people, especially foreign agents.

But Tim Butz, editor of *Counter-Spy*, took a cruelly light-hearted approach to the matter, and even said on television that the CIA should have recalled Welch after he was re-

vealed — thus, in effect, taking "credit" for fingering Welch. *Time* magazine now quotes Kirkpatrick Sale, an adviser to *Counter-Spy*: "Our job is to expose every clandestine agent until the CIA abandons its covert actions."

There are many things wrong with that statement:

1. Sale talks of exposing "every clandestine agent" when even editor Butz says that *Counter-Spy* will not reveal deep-cover agents, only light-cover ones.

2. But deep-cover agents are those most likely to engage in covert activities of a violent sort.

3. Therefore *Counter-Spy* is working on the terrorist logic of threatening one group of people (men like Welch, who was not a covert operation type) in order to coerce a second group (the real masters of covert actions) to do their will.

4. It is this admitted coercion that invalidates the whole effort of *Counter-Spy*. The CIA should be examined and reformed, or even eliminated, by open and democratic methods, not by this blackmail from a few people with a printing press. These critics are not only helping the CIA. They are imitating it.